



grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

May 15-21, 2017

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Sermon by Lead Pastor Doug Forrester:
The Gospel According to Calvin and Hobbes: "Doormat"

Notes from sermon on 5/14:	Prayer requests:
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Family Focus Question (before sermon):

When Jesus says "the meek shall inherit the earth," who is he talking about?

3 Questions for small groups (after sermon):

1. What does it mean for you to be a "peacemaker?"
2. How can we love our enemies without being taken advantage of by them?
3. What does Paul mean by "heaping burning coals" in Romans 12?

Monday, May 15: Read Matthew 5: 38-42

Before we even get started this week, we have some almost required supplemental reading for you. If you possibly have the time, **google "Walter Wink Jesus and Nonviolence"** and read the 5-page pdf document that appears at the top of the search. It draws from two books by Walter Wink, an American biblical scholar, theologian, and activist who was well known for his work related to nonviolent resistance. Doug Forrester's sermon this Sunday will be largely based on Wink's writings, as well as, of course, the brilliance of our now-familiar protagonist, Calvin, who this week finds himself on the wrong end of a bully's fist after attempting to "turn the other cheek."

In today's gospel reading from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us to turn the other cheek, give away our shirt as well as our cloak, and walk the extra mile. Is Jesus telling us all to be doormats? Are we supposed to enable bullies, oppressors, racists, and authoritarian regimes to continue doing evil? In times like these, we have two basic human reactions: fight or flight. Perhaps, as Walter Wink and Doug Forrester will teach us, Jesus instead is calling us to a third way...one of both nonviolence and non-submission, where we refuse to be submissive slaves, backhanded on our left cheek, but offer our right as equals, seizing our own power as children of God out of love for ourselves *and* our enemies.

Tuesday, May 16: Read Matthew 5:43-48

It's so much easier to run away, retaliate, or, even more commonly, submit to the lies of others who tell us we are inferior or unworthy than it is to follow Jesus' "third way." To look an oppressor in the eye and love them takes strength and courage. It allows love and righteousness to take control of the power dynamic and rewrite the script. It breaks the cycle of humiliation that results from passively allowing oppression to continue or the cycle of violence that results from violently stooping to evil's level. The

more we get to know Jesus in the scriptures, the more we learn that he was no doormat, for he stood up to the oppressive Roman Empire like no one ever had- not through armed rebellion that would result in catastrophe, or passive acceptance that would have changed nothing. Rather, Jesus taught his followers to expose the injustices of a system that took away the coats of those in debt by encouraging them to strip down naked, shaming all those who looked upon them (Wink, *The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium*, 1998). Later, he would teach all of us by shaming an entire empire by walking to the cross while simultaneously loving and forgiving them all.

Wednesday, May 17: Read Romans 12:9-14

There is nothing passive about the fourteen separate instructions Paul gives us in today's reading from Romans. If we follow these instructions we are constantly in motion, actively loving, holding fast, persevering, serving, and contributing. These descriptors would make us sound like a bunch of busybodies were in not for the focus on patience and focus on prayer. Notice that we are to hate evil, but bless those who persecute us. How can we do that? When have you stood up to evil while actively loving the evildoer? What did that look like?

Thursday, May 18: Read Romans 12:15-21

"For by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." This is not the first time these confusing words appear in the Bible – see Proverbs 25:21-22. This attitude can sound like vengeance, and most of us can imagine "holier-than-thou" behavior being done in a less-than-loving attitude meant to bring glory to ourselves rather than inspire repentance and renewal in another. We can also all remember a time when we were shamed by our bad behavior in light of someone else's grace, forgiveness, and kindness. That hot flush of shame felt a lot like burning coals being heaped on our head, didn't it? That feeling came from the Holy Spirit convicting us of our bad behavior, working through the love of others.

Friday, May 19: Read Ephesians 6:10-17

In calling us to nonviolence, we are not being excused from the battle between good and evil. Today's scripture tells us we are called to struggle against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, and spiritual forces. But will we be sent into battle unarmed? We can fight lies with truth and stand up to false accusations through righteous behavior. Our faith can shield us from all fear and doubt. Our assurance of salvation can protect our minds from anxiety. Our attitudes and acts of peace will carry us through minefields of politics, misunderstandings, and conflict. Through all of it, we have the power of the Holy Spirit. Are we using all of our "weapons" to fight for the kingdom of God...a kingdom where all people have love, dignity, justice, peace, and the basic necessities of life? Or are we using our own weapons of sharp tongues, hard fists, and cold hearts? Are we not in the fight at all?

Saturday, May 20: Scripture Memorization: Romans 12:9

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor."

Sunday, May 21: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer for

Common Confession: *Loving God, we do not always keep your commandments; we fail to love you; our conscience is not clear. Wash us in the water of life that we may live again through the grace and mercy of Jesus, our resurrected Savior. Amen.*